

existed for years in Somalia or the recent instability that has threatened to destabilize the region. And resurgent Taliban forces are contributing to growing levels of instability in Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, the U.S. presence in Iraq is being used as a recruiting tool for terrorist organizations from around the world. In Indonesia, home to historically moderate Islamic communities, conservative religious groups are becoming increasingly hostile towards the United States. In countries like Thailand, Nigeria, Mali, the Philippines, and elsewhere, militant groups are using U.S. policies in Iraq to fuel hatred towards the West.

The war in Iraq was, and remains, a war of choice. Some in this body, even those who have questioned the initial rationale for the war, suggest that we have no option but to remain in Iraq indefinitely. That argument is mistaken. We do have a choice, and that is whether we continue to devote so much of our resources to Iraq or whether we devote our resources to waging a global campaign against al-Qaida and its allies. We cannot do both.

If we choose to stay the course in Iraq, that means keeping large numbers of U.S. military personnel in Iraq indefinitely. It means continuing to ask our brave service members to somehow provide a military solution to a political problem, one that will require the will of the Iraqi people to resolve. Our military has achieved its mission in Iraq. Until we redeploy from Iraq, our very presence there will continue to generate new terrorists from around the world that will come to Iraq to attack U.S. troops.

Staying the course also means that our military's readiness levels will continue to deteriorate. It means that a disproportionate level of our military resources will continue to be focused on Iraq while terrorist networks strengthen their efforts worldwide.

The fight against the Taliban and al-Qaida in Afghanistan, too, will continue to suffer, as it has since we invaded Iraq. If we stay the course in Iraq, we won't be able to finish the job in Afghanistan.

Finally, if this were our Nation's choice, the safety of our country would be uncertain, at best. Terrorist organizations and insurgencies around the world will continue to use our presence in Iraq as rallying cry and recruiting slogan. Terrorist networks will continue to increase their sophistication and reach as our military capabilities are strained in Iraq.

I think we can see why this approach plays into the terrorists' hands—and even why bin Laden might suggest that the U.S. presence in Iraq is beneficial to his cause.

Of course, staying the course isn't a necessity.

The alternative is to establish a new national security strategy that addresses the wide-ranging nature of the threats that face our country.

This second choice will require replacing our current self-defeating national security strategy with a comprehensive one to defeat the terrorist networks that attacked us on 9/11. It will require a realignment of our finite resources. And it will also require a change in the way we view and discuss the threat to our country. We must reject phrases like "Islamic fascism," which are inaccurate and potentially offensive to peace-loving Muslims around the world. And we need to understand that there is no "central front" in this war, as the President argues.

The threats to our country are global, unlike any we have encountered in the past. Our enemy is not a state with clearly defined borders. We must respond instead to what is a loose network of terrorist organizations that do not function according to a strict hierarchy. Our enemy isn't one organization. It is a series of highly mobile, diffuse entities that operate largely beyond the reach of our conventional warfighting techniques. The only way to defeat them is to adapt our strategy and our capabilities and to engage the enemy on our terms and by using our advantages.

We have proven that we can not do that with our current approach in Iraq.

This choice—this new strategy—would require redeploying from Iraq and recalibrating our military posture overseas. It would require finishing the job in Afghanistan with increased resources, troops, and equipment. It would require a new form of diplomacy, scrapping the "transformational diplomacy" this administration has used to offend, push away, and ultimately alienate so many of our friends and allies, and replacing it with an aggressive, multilateral approach that would leverage the strength of our friends to defeat our common enemies.

It would also require the infusion of new capabilities and strength for our Armed Forces. By freeing up our special forces assets and redeploying our military power from Iraq, we would be better positioned to handle global threats and future contingencies. Our current state of readiness is unacceptable and must be repaired. Our National Guard, too, must be capable of responding to natural disasters and future contingencies.

Finally, this new approach would make our country safer. It would enable our Government to spend time addressing the wide range of threats our country faces. It would free up strategic capacity to deal with Iran, North Korea, and the Middle East, and to provide real leadership internationally against other enemies we all face, like poverty, HIV/AIDS, and corruption.

In sum, it would help return the United States to a place of preeminence in the world and would give us the opportunity to address the very real threats we face in the 21st century.

The bottom line is that we cannot afford to continue down the path the

President has set forth. We face real threats from al-Qaida and other terrorist organizations. Accordingly, we need to strengthen our military, diplomatic, and intelligence capabilities. And we need clear-sighted leadership with policies aimed at confronting that threat and with the credibility to mobilize the support of the American people and the world.

This isn't a choice, it is a necessity.

HIGHER EDUCATION ACT EXTENSION

Mr. NELSON of Florida. Mr. President, I rise today to support the extension of the Higher Education Act. However, I would like to raise two issues.

First, I would have preferred a clean extension of this act as the other extensions have been.

Second, I am concerned about the impact this extension will have on the many other graduate students nationwide who rely on financial assistance, including students at Florida's Nova Southeastern University.

Nova Southeastern University's student body is unique with eighty percent pursuing graduate studies. This is the opposite of typical institutions where 80 percent of students are at the undergraduate level.

Nova holds the distinction of leading the Nation in postgraduate degrees awarded to Hispanic students.

Nova is also the largest originator of School as Lender loans in the country, and thus, is disproportionately affected by changes to the School as Lender Program.

The School as Lender Program allowed Nova to provide hundreds of millions of dollars in low-cost loans to students.

Premiums from the sale of those loans provided the university with millions of dollars annually which it used to educate its students. Nova maintains it helped keep their tuition rates down.

Denying Nova its ability to use these premiums for all students will hurt thousands of Nova students each year.

This extension also eliminates the ability of school lenders and eligible lender trustees to issue low-cost PLUS loans to graduate students. This change could increase the cost of graduate school for many students who need multiple loans to finish their degree.

For these reasons, I am disappointed this is not a clean extension, and I will continue to engage our Senate Education Committee leaders about this issue in the months ahead.

HONORING OUR ARMED FORCES

LANCE CORPORAL PHILIP JOHNSON

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, today I rise to pay tribute to U.S. Marine Corps LCpl Philip A. Johnson, of Enfield, CT, a heroic young man who lost his life serving his country in Iraq on September 2, 2006. He was 19 years old.